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Lambda Letters Project

32573

Vol. 3, No. 9

September, 1995

6212 Silverton Way, Carmichael, California 95608

Phone (916) 965-6851

The Two-Year Bills Are Coming, and We're Not Ready!

We *desperately* need the help of one or more volunteers with a computer, a database program, and a good printer. This volunteer would help us print Lambda-grams (a telegram-like document) for delivery to our state legislators next January. Here's why we need help.

According to the rules of the State Legislature, any bill introduced in the Legislature this year had to be approved by its first house no later than the end of last June. For example, a bill introduced in the State Senate had to be approved by the full Senate and sent to the Assembly no later than June 30, 1995. If it wasn't, the bill died.

However, a bill could be saved if the members of its first house "granted reconsideration" of the bill. In this case it is given a second chance. No action will be taken on these "second chance" bills until next January, but then they must be approved by their house of origin by January 31st or they will be truly dead. Often the bill must be approved by one or more committees before it can go to the floor of its house of origin. Many bills will be going through this process—and probably

Continued on page 7

Win a Dream Weekend for Two!

The Sacramento-area Entertainment Books are here. Books for the rest of the state will be arriving shortly. You can use the coupons in these books *as soon as you get them*. So order your book today! Our goal is to sell 400 copies, so we have two unbeatable offers for you:

- ♦ Sell 15 Entertainment Books for Lambda Letters and get another book absolutely free!
- ♦ Sell the most books of any of our sellers (you must sell a minimum of 50 books to win) and win a free two-night's stay for two at a resort on the Russian River or in Palm Springs/Cathedral City. The winner gets to choose which resort area to go to.

Call us or drop us a line along with your letters, to find out how you can qualify for these exciting prizes.

We really need your help in selling Entertainment Books this year. As you know, we do not require membership dues or fees from any of our members. We have always felt that we don't want a person's inability to pay to stand in the way of

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Lambda Letters Progress Report

Letters Collected

July, 1995	2,565 letters
So far this year	19,814 letters

Dollars Spent

July, 1995	\$1,543
So far this year	\$8,848

Can You Help?

Please support the very important work of the Lambda Letters Project with your contributions.

Lambda Letters Project

Statement of Purpose

To promote people of color, feminist, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and HIV/AIDS status advocacy and to bring people of color, women, lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and persons affected by or living with HIV/AIDS into full participation in the mainstream of American society now, exercising all the privileges and responsibilities thereof.

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Faces of Sacramento

Volunteer Legislative Analyst Needed

Lambda Letters needs a volunteer to compose our person of color sample letter and the article explaining the letter each month. The volunteer would also contact various groups to seek their advice on what subjects need to be covered by our letters. Lambda Letters can provide a list of such groups. The volunteer would be asked to attend monthly staff meetings in Sacramento (1-2 hours) and quarterly Board meetings, also in Sacramento. Time spent on the job averages 4-5 hours per month.

Prior experience is not necessary, but the person selected must have good written communications skills. This is an important opportunity to influence the issues covered by Lambda Letters each month and affect the way that legislators respond to the needs of the people of color community.

Please contact us today and let us know whether you can help us in this important way. Include a note with your letters or call us at (916) 965-6851. A duty statement is available upon request.

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(*Actual cost to LLP for you to receive 44 letters in one year.)

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Send payment and your camera-ready copy, along with your name and phone number, to:

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Deadline is the 25th of each month.

H.R. 2202 Could Hurt You in Several Ways

Representative Lamar Smith (R-Texas) has introduced H.R. 2202, the "Immigration in the National Interest Act," that is by far the most restrictive piece of immigration legislation introduced to date. Its excessive and punitive provisions include a national identification system, a one-third cut in legal immigration levels, and a denial of social services to all noncitizen children. Please write to your member of Congress to oppose this draconian legislation.

The bill would create a national ID verification system for employment eligibility. Probably the records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service and/or the Social Security Administration would form the basis of this system. Those records would be checked by employers to see if a job applicant had the right to work in the U.S. The problem is that numerous federal government reports indicate that the INS and Social Security records contain mistakes as much as 30 percent of the time. That means many people legally authorized to work, including native-born Americans, might be refused work on the basis of wrong information. This system might keep *you* from getting a job!

All undocumented immigrants would be ineligible for any means-tested public benefits provided or funded by federal or state governments. Means-tested programs are those available only to poor people, and include school lunch, nutrition, and health programs. That means many of the poor are going to go hungry and their illnesses will not be treated. For example, a particularly difficult-to-cure form of tuberculosis is spreading rapidly among the poor. Left untreated this disease will become a widespread, major, and expensive public health mess—a mess that will have to be cleaned up with *your tax dollars*. The disease will not confine itself to people denied services by H.R. 2202! It will spread to other poor people—impoverished *American* citizens who will still qualify for taxpayer-paid public health care. It is in our general interest as a country of healthy individuals to assure that poor people get proper nutrition and health care before we have a major problem on our hands.

But that's not all. H.R. 2202 would also prevent many noncitizen family members of U.S. resident

Ryan White CARE Act Redux

Lambda Letters Project is doing something very unusual this month: the letter for the HIV/AIDS issue is similar to the one we sent in July. We are doing this because reauthorization of the Ryan White CARE Act, a crucial piece of AIDS funding legislation, is in trouble. It needs both cosponsors (especially Republican ones) and votes. In addition, the bill had some very gay-unfriendly restrictions imposed on it in the Senate (and we have already written to Senators Feinstein and Boxer concerning this). We hope these restrictions will disappear in the House or in conference committee.

A different letter, thanking them for their sponsorship, will be going to representatives Bilbray (R-San Diego), Moorhead (R-Glendale), Eshoo (D-Palo Alto), Pelosi (D-San Francisco), and Waxman (D-Los Angeles), who were cosponsors of the bill at the time it was introduced. Please refer to the July issue of this newsletter for further details on this important legislation.

citizens from immigrating to the U.S. to reunite with their loved ones. They could enter the country only if the U.S.-based family member earns an income of over twice the poverty line (that would total over \$13,600 for an individual, \$19,600 for an existing family of two, \$26,900 for a family of three, and so on). The U.S. family member(s) would also have to buy health insurance for any immigrating family members. Needless to say, many native-born Americans cannot afford such insurance! This legislation means that many American citizens of modest means who are foreign born, and whose families still live abroad, will never see their loved ones again. That is too cruel.

America has a long and honorable tradition of welcoming people who are fleeing persecution in other parts of the world. H.R. 2202 would tarnish this tradition by denying applicants due process and denying them the right to document the persecution they face to a qualified asylum officer.

H.R. 2202 is unworthy of the traditions of compassion and justice that have made this country great. Please urge your member of the House of Representatives to oppose this bill.

Congress Battles Over a Woman's Right to Choose

After two days of acrimonious debate, the House of Representatives passed a major spending bill for fiscal year 1996 that may have a major impact on a woman's right to choose. (Please see the women's issue article in this newsletter for additional details on this bill.)

The bill, H.R. 2127, significantly tightens restrictions on abortions for poor women. It also eliminates current penalties on medical schools that do not teach abortion techniques to their students. This could affect wealthier women's right to choose by reducing the supply of doctors qualified to perform abortions. Conservatives also attempted to kill family planning programs for poor women, but a vote on August 2nd restored funding for this program.

The bill's future is uncertain. President Clinton has repeatedly promised to veto the bill if it reaches the White House in its current form and moderate forces are stronger in the Senate than in the House of Representatives. The Senate may remove some of the bill's worst provisions.

Here are some details about action on H.R. 2127. Under current federal law, states are required to provide Medicaid funding (called MediCal in California) for abortions for poor women who are pregnant as the result of rape or incest. H.R. 2127 would remove that requirement. Poor women pregnant by rape or incest would simply be out of luck. On August 3rd a vote was held in an attempt to overturn this onerous provision of the bill. The attempt to restore these protections for poor women failed by a vote of 206-215. To see how California's representatives voted on this issue, look at Column A in Table 1. (Note: a Yes vote in Column A means the representative voted for restoring these protections for poor women; a "DV" in Column A means the representative did not vote.)

H.R. 2127 also attempted to kill funding for family planning services for the poor. Under current federal law, no Title X funds can be used to pay for abortions. Conservatives complain, however, that funding of family planning programs indirectly makes it possible for them also to perform abortions. Luckily for us, the conservatives were stopped. On August 2nd

Table 1. Vote on H.R. 2127

Legislator	Party	A	B	C
Bill Baker	R	N	N	N
Xavier Becerra	D	Y	N	Y
Anthony Beilenson	D	Y	Y	Y
Howard Berman	D	Y	Y	Y
Brian Bilbray	R	Y	Y	Y
Sonny Bono	R	Y	N	Y
George Brown	D	Y	Y	Y
Ken Calvert	R	N	N	N
Gary Condit	D	Y	Y	Y
Christopher Cox	R	N	N	N
Randy Cunningham	R	N	N	N
Ronald Dellums	D	Y	Y	Y
Julian Dixon	D	Y	Y	Y
Calvin Dooley	D	Y	Y	Y
John Doolittle	R	N	N	N
Robert Dornan	R	N	N	N
David Dreier	R	N	N	N
Anna Eshoo	D	Y	Y	Y
Sam Farr	D	Y	Y	Y
Vic Fazio	D	Y	Y	Y
Bob Filner	D	DV	Y	DV
Elton Gallegly	R	N	N	N
Jane Harman	D	Y	Y	Y
Wally Herger	R	N	N	N
Steve Horn	R	Y	Y	Y
Duncan Hunter	R	N	N	N
Jay Kim	R	N	N	N
Tom Lantos	D	Y	Y	Y
Jerry Lewis	R	N	Y	N
Zoe Lofgren	D	Y	Y	Y
Mathew Martinez	D	Y	Y	Y
Robert Matsui	D	Y	Y	Y
Howard McKeon	R	DV	N	N
George Miller	D	Y	Y	Y
Norman Mineta	D	Y	Y	Y
Carlos Moorhead	R	N	N	N
Ron Packard	R	N	N	N
Nancy Pelosi	D	Y	Y	Y
Richard Pombo	R	N	N	N
George P. Radanovich	R	N	N	N
Frank Riggs	R	N	Y	Y
Dana Rohrabacher	R	N	N	N
Lucille Roybal-Allard	D	Y	Y	Y
Edward Royce	R	N	N	N
Andrea Seastrand	R	N	N	N
Fortney Stark	D	Y	Y	Y
Bill Thomas	R	Y	Y	Y
Esteban Torres	D	Y	Y	Y
Walter Tucker	D	Y	N	N
Maxine Waters	D	Y	Y	Y
Henry Waxman	D	Y	Y	Y
Lynn Woolsey	D	Y	Y	Y

Continued on page 5

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Preventing Another Cut in Services to Poor Women

The women's issue this month focuses on yet another proposed cut in services to poor women. The proposed cut is a provision of H.R. 2127, the spending bill which is also discussed on page 4.

Under current federal law, states are required to provide Medicaid funding for abortions for poor women who are victims of rape or incest. H.R. 2127, which just passed the House, contains a provision which would eliminate that funding requirement. Sponsored by Congressman Ernest Jim Istook, Jr. (R-OK), this provision was added by the Appropriations Committee on July 21st. Table 1 on page 4 shows how each representative voted on this issue.

According to research performed by the National Victim Center, over 600,000 women are forcibly raped each year. The vast majority of Americans support Medicaid funding for abortions that are the result of those violent, brutal crimes against women. Amidst popular support, Congress expanded federal funding in 1993 to include instances when a women's pregnancy resulted from rape or incest.

It has been argued in Congress that we cannot afford to continue this funding; but even from a strict monetary point of view, this funding requirement makes good sense. According to a study done by the Alan Guttmacher Institute, for every dollar spent by the federal government on abortions for poor women, \$4.40 is saved in medical and welfare expenditures for an unintended birth.

Battle Over Right to Choose

Continued from page 4

the House of Representatives approved (by a vote of 224-204) an amendment to restore funding for family planning services. Column B in Table 1 shows how your representatives voted on this amendment. (Note: a Yes vote in Column B indicates that the representative favored funding for family planning; a "DV" in Column B indicates the representative did not vote.)

On another abortion issue, the House voted to protect medical training institutions from losing federal money if they do not teach students how to perform abortions. Under the bill, schools can now refuse to provide such training without fear of losing federal funds. Column C in Table 1 shows how our legislators voted on this issue. (Note: a Yes in Column C means the legislator voted for penalizing schools that refuse to provide the training; a "DV" in Column C indicates the legislator did not vote.)

It has also been argued by those members opposing funding that our government should take a moral stand on the issue of abortion. However, these same Congressmembers are also supporting across-the-board cuts in *all* services to the poor. Is this moral? With regard to the moral role of government, Hubert Humphrey put it best when he said, "... the moral test of government is how it treats those who are in the dawn of life—the children; how it treats those who are in the twilight of life—the elderly; and how it treats those who are in the shadows of life—the sick, the disabled, the needy, and the unemployed."

H.R. 2127 is now in the Senate, so this month's letter is directed to Senators Feinstein and Boxer, urging them to oppose this provision. Please sign it and support our effort to eliminate this draconian measure which only serves to victimize poor women further.

In Sacramento County

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Disagree with Us?

It would be marvelous—no miraculous—if all 750 members signed every letter they received from Lambda Letters each month. But we do not always agree all the time. Let's face it, the members of the Democratic and Republican parties do not agree all the time, so how could we?

If your conscience doesn't permit you to sign one of our four letters in a given month, then don't sign it! But you needn't throw it away either. If you wish, drop us a note giving us your reason for not signing a particular letter. That will help our board members and staff keep in touch with the views of all our members.

Even members of the board choose not to sign a particular letter now and then. Feel free to do the same. Remember, however, that most members do sign all of the letters most of the time. That speaks well of our letter writers who follow the general policy outlines of the Board of Directors and who seek to meet the needs of such a diverse community as lesbians, gays, bisexuals, people with HIV/AIDS, women, and people of color.

Even if you sign just one letter a month, you are giving your support to those who volunteer time, money, and other resources month after month to express our views to legislators, other elected officials, and sometimes even private industry. We welcome your support even if we do not always agree with each other!

Dream Weekend

Continued from page 1

gathering letters on civil rights issues. So we always provide our services without charge. That has been an important factor in our rapid growth. This year, for example, we expect to gather over 30,000 letters.

Although we ask people to make voluntary contributions when they can, this has never raised enough money to cover all our expenses. So it has been necessary to sell Entertainment Books each fall to raise the money needed to continue the important work that you and we are doing together. The Board of Directors and staff of Lambda Letters Project are too few in number to sell the number of Entertainment Books needed to cover all our expenses. We need to sell 400 books this year and we will need your help to reach that goal.

Selling Entertainment Books is fun and it can be profitable for you and Lambda Letters. Please enclose a note with your letters or call us. Tell us that you will pitch in by helping us sell Entertainment Books. And don't forget to order one for yourself this year, too!

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Two-Year Bills Coming

Continued from page 1

hundreds of votes will occur on these bills in the space of just 31 days in January.

Many of these bills are of great concern to you. Two bills would allow statewide registration of domestic partners and health benefits for the domestic partners of state employees. Another would make it more difficult for spousal abusers to get custody of their children. There is a bill to provide greater protection against mistreatment of lesbian/gay/bisexual children by their teachers or other students. One bad two-year bill would specifically allow the Boy Scouts to discriminate against gays. Another would make it more difficult for people of color to prove their right to vote.

We want to provide input to legislators as the votes on these bills are occurring. But obviously our usual process of sending you one set of four letters once a month will be too little, too late. We would like to send you a special mailing in December describing these important two-year bills, explaining Lambda Letters' position on them, and seeking your permission to send a message on each of those bills to your legislator. If a bill is to be voted on both in a committee and on the floor of the Legislature we would send messages to both places. The messages would be printed on our specially designed telegram form (called a "Lambdagram") and hand-carried to the legislator's office.

The problem is that we don't have any volunteers with the time to print out the necessary Lambdagrams. Our main computer will be occupied with the routine business of the Project. Another volunteer has a computer with the software needed to print them, but his dot-matrix printer is too slow. Can you help? Do you have a friend who might help with this important project? If so, please enclose a note with your letters or call us. By the way, any volunteers would probably need to be from the Sacramento area to keep mailing costs down and to speed delivery of the messages once they are printed.

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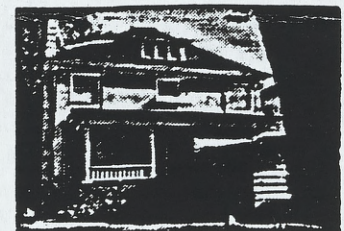
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Hail to the Chief for His Security Clearance Decision!

President Clinton officially ended the government assumption that homosexuals cannot be trusted with national secrets by ordering an end to discrimination based on sexual orientation in granting security clearances.

The executive order signed by Clinton last month came as a pleasant surprise to most gay, lesbian, and bisexual rights groups across the country. This month, we are asking you to write a thank-you letter to the president. Although his decision was long overdue, it was politically courageous, considering the current political climate. We need to let him know how much we appreciate his decision. Elizabeth Birch, of the Human Rights Campaign Fund, called the decision "an important step toward ending governmentally sanctioned job discrimination against gay and lesbian people."

The order establishes the first uniform standards for U.S. agencies in granting security clearances, and it requires federal agencies to recognize each other's security clearances. The 13-page order adds the words "sexual orientation" to the nondiscrimination clause, covering access to classified material. It states, "No interference concerning the standards in this section may be raised solely on the basis of the sexual orienta-

tion of the employee." The order was spurred by findings of the Joint Security Commission in February, 1994, by the Intelligence and National Defense agencies in their reviews of such espionage cases as that of Aldrich Ames. An executive order has the force of law, but it can be overturned by Congress.

Representative Barney Frank (D-MA) has worked with both the Bush and Clinton administrations to change the policy on homosexuals and he deserves much of the credit for convincing the president to issue this order. Frank, obviously pleased, said, "we all know that innumerable lesbians and gay men have served their country loyally and well throughout its history without betraying its trust or giving away its secrets. But, shamefully, until now, the federal government was unwilling to acknowledge this fact."

According to Marsha Scott, deputy assistant to the president for political affairs, the order is effective immediately upon its publication in the Federal Register. Federal agencies for years denied security clearances to homosexuals on the assumption that all gay people are at risk of being blackmailed or otherwise compromised, but a General Accounting Office study found that eight government agencies apparently had stopped using homosexuality as a reason for denying security clearances to civilian workers.

In a year filled with disappointing court decisions, this executive order provides a bright spot for all gays, lesbians, and bisexuals who continue to fight to end discrimination. While we have been disappointed with some of Clinton's other decisions, we certainly should let him know how pleased we are with this executive order.

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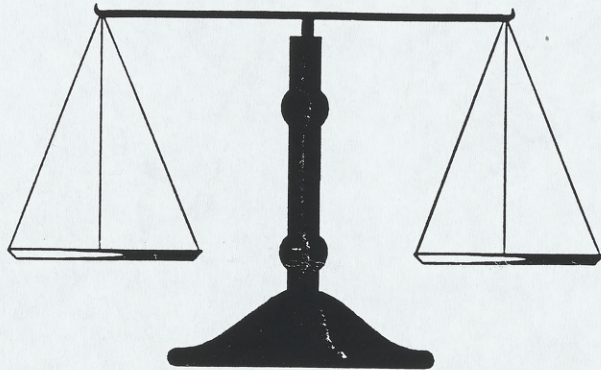
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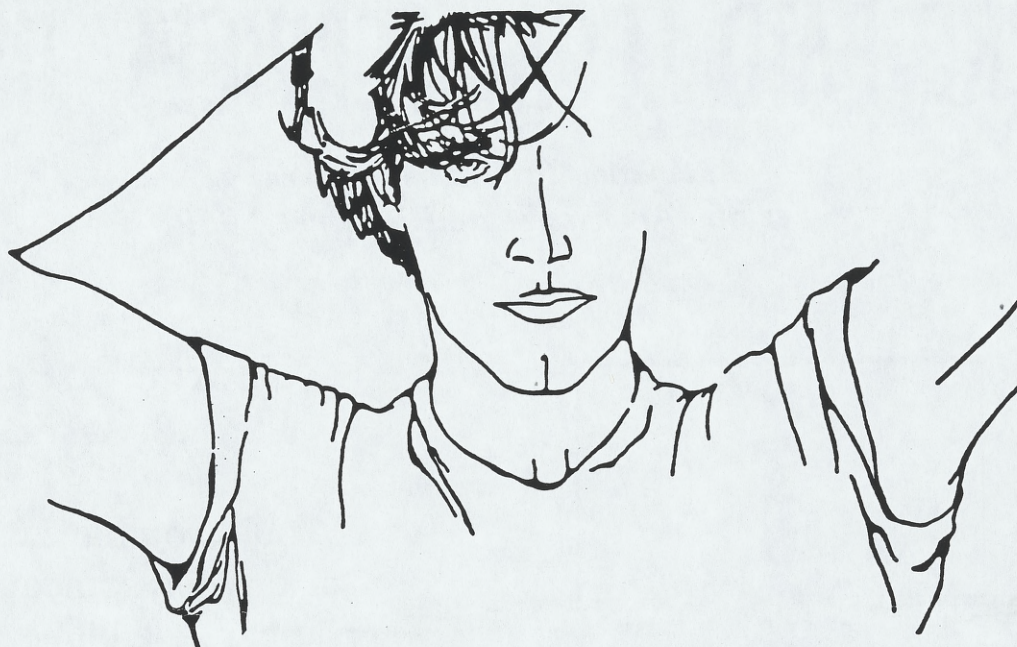
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